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THE TEACHER AND THE STATE

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> ADDRESS BEFORE THE GRADUATING CLASSES OF THE IOWA STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE JUNE 9TH, 1914

> > BY

THOMAS HUSTON MACBRIDE

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By transfer

THE TEACHER AND THE STATE.

All lacking in recognition indeed your speaker might well be esteemed, did he not hasten in his earliest sentence to express appreciation of his privilege in this fortunate hour. To appear thus before some hundreds of enthusiastic young people, all expectant of honor and congratulation, might well stir the sympathy of any who would essay, by uttered speech, to meet the thoughts of his fellow-men. There is really nowhere in the free life of this commonwealth anything finer than the scene before us this morning; whether we contemplate the beauty of the immediate spectacle, whether we estimate the significance of this ceremony, or whether, more keenly analytic, we go behind the present and see in all this the culmination of varied effort, of days and weeks of toil.

This is the time for gratulation; weightier matters, I am advised, may now for this day, at least, be laid aside. Comenius and Pestalozzi, Herbart and Montessori, Hegel and Schleiermacher, and all the rest may be forgotten. To-day is to-day, and all its windows open to the future. Needless to say, that future, for this class of 1914, is very bright. This is Iowa: white clouds only sweep slowly through azure deeps, flowers deck all the landscapes, and the sunlight lies upon the rising harvests. And yet, were we called upon to give reasons for such optimism as at this moment here prevails, such confidence, such security of mind, we might find ourselves, as usual, embarrassed for reply. We might begin to think again of examinations, happily now forever past; and only at the last might we fall back upon the general buoyancy of youth and find there, perhaps, the most obvious reason why, for us to-day, the fields and skies are fair.

This is Commencement. But in one sense it is different from the thousand similar events which everywhere for school and college divide with the roses the glory of this lovely month of June. In the college world, generally, men come up to claim diplomas, position among educated people; here, not educated only are these young people, but educators; informed indeed, but ready to share their knowledge instantly on demand; the day, the hour, the ceremony significant of much. Here is a double relation; past and future, to be sure, but unusual in that past and future are thus in singular fashion joined. Men and women who have enjoyed the hospitality of the commonwealth now go forth in peculiar sense, to serve it.

Your speaker has no thought to be intrusive; he is merely an onlooker in this fascinating scene. But, if you please, he may attempt to answer for you the significance of the day by discussing briefly this double relation of the teacher and the state, receiving and giving.

Education is said to be a great, but very ordinary, means to a great, but entirely ordinary, end. It is all so ordinary that we forget sometimes the mystery that it holds. We are richer to-day; but what is our added wealth? We are happier; wherein our blessedness acquired? We are quicker and smarter; of what kind is our accumulated wisdom? What have we gained? What have we really received?

In the first place, none of us, I think, will look back over the years and attempt to find any complete answer to such questions in tasks actually or perfunctorily accomplished. There are always students who find satisfaction in the completion from day to day of lessons formally assigned. I am not sure that they are wholly to blame. I am reminded that teachers themselves sometimes seem to do the same thing. For admission to Harvard, for example, so many books, so many lines, so many problems are required. Lessons are assigned and lessons heard, not to say recited. Small wonder if sometimes we estimate our finished work by such a scale! It is like climbing stairs. We count the number of treads in our ascent, never heeding to what they lead, whether to new prospect or new vision, or to vision of any sort at all.

Now, of course this kind of work is all very necessary. To reach a summit, stairs are exceedingly convenient things. But in any case, how soon the stairway may be forgotten; especially if we are to live upon the heights. No doubt all work attempted in a school like this, has for its object mastery, in so far, of the subjects we attempt. If we expect to teach, of course we are expected also to remember, at least, the principal facts and data of our subjects. We can never expect to enjoy our rightful influence in our work, or really to count for the most in this world, unless we are recognized as authority in something, somewhere.

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And yet, in all that we have done, we are, I hope, perfectly aware that our great gain is not in fact and datum, not in things that are recorded by any generous registrar, but in those things so hard to classify or name, recorded in some strange way in the book of experience, in the tapestry of each human life. You know by this time, I am sure, that it is not so much the subject, but the effect, that you have won. Latin, for instance, you have studied; but it is not in the amount of actual knowledge of great Caesar's speech that you rejoice to-day. Even now that hard-earned taste of ancient or medieval lore begins to die upon the palate, and promises soon to vanish quite, unless sedulously kept up, and to leave but a lingering reminiscence; and yet-suppose that by some finest intellectual telegraphy, we could stretch a viewless wire back across the centuries as we stretch threads of copper across the valleys. Take up the receiver and let the Roman speak; you could hardly understand him. At this end of the line his Latin sounds Italian, French, Spanish, Roumanian, even. Nothing in it but has changed "into something rich and strange;" but you have added two thousand years to the compass of your life, and all the history of modern civilization lies between; this you have gained! You may not understand Caesar, but you do understand the outcome of Caesar's life.

German, too, you have attempted; and the most philosophic tongue now spoken among men, has spread itself before you. You have caught some glimpses of it; but, perplexed by the genders, perhaps, of things inanimate, or overwhelmed by the genius that can keep in mind the unfinished first word of a sentence, going on, through phrase after phrase, only at length to find completion in some insignificant closing particle, and thus to attain in unbroken sphere a completely uttered thought, -overwhelmed by this, you have perhaps been content to carry hither only some lyric remnants, bits of haunting verse that immortalize Heine or Goethe: although perhaps even here the author is for you merely an unburied shade. But if you have studied your German rightly, as no doubt you have, at the mere word the torches flare again against the night of the old Teutobergerwald; the German knights ride along the Baltic sands; castles rise and are mirrored in the green waters of the sunny Rhine; the Hohenzollerns march to empire, as Frederick Second breaks the power of foolish France, gives Canada to

English speech, and makes possible this Commencement at Cedar Falls! That is what you have found in German!

Mathematics, physics have had their turn; and at this moment, most of your acquisitions lie in the fourth dimension of space. Pedagogy and even psychology-boldest attempt to plat easy avenues to the conquest of man's soul-even these no longer stand out with that sharpness which their uttered principles did once suggest. Both perception and apperception have become, possibly, exception, if not deception; and yetyou know how to teach. Why? Because you have seen experienced, gifted teachers teach; and, more, you are confident, not of psychology, but of yourself; and success comes with the dawning of the day. You have studied natural science. Was it botany, geology, zoology? You may not now recall; but as you look out of the window this morning the world looks different indeed; trees and herbs are marshalled in a procession that extends into the past so far, that only some concept of life's beginning can ever again satisfy your dreaming vision. You have added to your own life the millions of years that lie behind us.

In fact, all along the lines of studied effort, if you are really normal students, I believe you are ready to admit that, while you have been studying all these things, you have not been limited by what you saw or heard, but your minds have far outrun the printed page, the speaker's tone, the measured hour or day or year, and you are away to claim an empire all your own, whose boundaries are the fields of time!

I am sure I shall not be here misunderstood. From what I have said, you realize that I am not belittling the idea or value of exact information. I beg you to consider that, as I said at the beginning, real efficiency anywhere is conditioned upon accuracy and breadth of knowledge. I am referring merely to the ordinary experience of the ordinary student leaving an ordinary college, or even a teachers college. All exercises are but means. The value of the real outcome must be found in something else than mere numbered page, or treasured fact, however precious in itself. Only in yourself is the reward of a scholar's labor, only in experience shall such expenditure as his be justified.

You are not linguists, but you know what language-study means, how and why it is pursued. You are not mathematicians, but you appreciate the efforts of those who are. You are not men and women of letters, but you know in what direction lie the flowery fields of literature, even if as yet you own not one! Dr. McCosh, president of Princeton College, once when an old man read in chapel that famous thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, which contains the phrase, "For we know in part"—. He stopped and turned upon his audience that scholarly face, lit up with a wonderful light and crowned with the erown of age; "For we know in part," he said. "But we know!" Now you have it! All these days, these years, we have been learning, and now at last we find as a result that we know, indeed; but—we know in part only. But the eyes of our understandings have been opened; whereas we were blind, now we see, we know! We have been learning; yea, verily: we have been learning to know!

But this matter of receptive education goes farther still, means more than anything I have so far suggested or described. Permit me to illustrate once more:

"As You Like It" is your favorite play, the sweetest, purest, most delightful piece of human fancy ever written. Touchstone, as you remember, is a clown, but wise and witty; only by profession, a fool. The shepherd is talking with Touchstone:

"How like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?"

"In respect it is solitary . . . in the fields, it pleaseth me well. . . . Hast thou any philosophy in thee, Shepherd?"

Then the shepherd goes on:

"No more but that I know the more one sickens, the worse at ease he is; that the property of rain is to wet, and fire to burn; that good pasture makes fat sheep, and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun."

Now this is the outcome of the shepherd's experience; this is his attitude of mind, his philosophy. Professor James says, a man's philosophy is the most interesting thing about him. And here the shepherd, as each of us, has his philosophy, his sense of the world, his estimate of realities, of values; he has his way of looking at things; he is an optimist, a pessimist, or what not; he is discouraged or hopeful; and this is what we get from our contact with the things about us, with books, and teachers, and classes. From the atmosphere of this fine-builded hilltop on the prairie, from all our study, this alone we gain, this that abides. You came here to learn to be teachers, builders for the state, not to study arithmetic; you could do that anywhere; numbers may carry magic, as you begin to see, and transcend arithmetic; not grammar, only, but *the* grammar, the correct ordering of human life; you came for personal culture, for inspiration, for intellectual direction, for spiritual power, for a new vision of this world, for an attitude of mind: "Hast thou any philosophy in *thee*," teacher?

But not yet have I closed my briefest inventory of your winning, here beneath the elms, in these lovely associations; not yet. At least two more entries must be made to the credit side of your account. The first rises directly from the condition I have just described. It is an asset even more valuable than that attitude of mind which seems so all-important now. It is an acquisition that others, fortunately indeed, recognize better than we ever do ourselves; perhaps in ourselves we know it never; therefore I may tell it. I mean now that wondrous ability which God gives a man, of becoming better than he knows! The ability to serve his fellow-men unconsciously, and therefore more potently and more beautifully than ever will be told. These teachers of yours have that gift. You know it; they do not. You have felt it many a time and so share it; you shall feel it yet again. You may not describe it; you may not seek it; it is yours; it is the bloom of the fruit; it is the iridescence of the plume; it is the luminous brilliance of the wave; it is the blaze of the opal; the silent, unspoken, all-potent influence of each noble human soul!

It is said that Robert Moffatt, the pioneer Scotch teacher in South Africa, was impressed in early manhood with the idea that, could he only tell his story, all Africa would heed. In his old age, it is said that he thought of his life as a failure. But in both cases he was much mistaken. It is true that Africa did not wholly listen; but, on the other hand, it is also true that South Africa to-day is English, and in the line of all future social progress.

> "In the glory of youth the young man sped Forth from his father's door; "They will heed,' he cried, 'to the spoken word For the great world rolls before."

"In the weakness of age an old man crept Back to his father's door; "I have uttered my word and none has heard, And the great world rolls as before."

No: don't believe it! Life is forever more than a spoken

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word! Moffatt lives, and his work abides, though he realized never, as he thought, the expectation of his plans. Moffatt's son-in-law was David Livingston! and David Livingston was followed by Cecil Rhodes!

There is still one other asset which is yours this morning, and must never be overlooked nor forgotten in any such review as that we are making here and now. This last acquisition I here mention is the wonderful circle of friendship into which you have been privileged to come, and in which hereafter you shall have abiding place. The united faculty and alumni of this college constitute a fraternity, a sodality, whose warmth and loyalty are of never-to-be-estimated importance and value to every man and to every woman privileged to enter the charmed circle. Here is no bond of wealth, of caste, of privilege, of religion, even; but nevertheless an allegiance that shall dominate all future years. You young people, on this fair June morning, have no slightest idea how strong are the bonds of such affection; and how hereafter with increasing years, in spite of yourselves, in spite of opposition, in spite of mishap, discouragement, and apparent failure even, the spirit and inspiration, the united courage of these associations, will work miracles and carry you out and forward to a life of rich accomplishment, of valiant service in this world.

Let us sum it all up: Scholarship, knowledge, learning these you have in part; mental attitude, disposition, philosophy of the world, views of duty, character in short, felt but not seen of men—these you have in full; and then, behind all these, the organization and sympathy and mutual allegiance, the bond of common affection and purpose of this great college; such make for you this morning memorable forever, the Commencement, the beginning of life beautiful forevermore.

But now, having thus sketched the outcome of past experience, let us turn for a little in the other direction, and see how we can use the gifts we have thus acquired.

This, at first blush, looks easy: we are teachers; all we have to do is to teach; and what is more, if we teach in public schools, as most of us expect to do, custom has prescribed what we shall teach: reading, arithmetic, grammar, history, geography, and such things. To this the Iowa statutes have sagely added physiology and music; and after 1915, agriculture, manual training, and domestic science seem to be "indieated," as the homeopathist might say. This all looks simple enough; but if the argument just concluded has significance at all, it is plain that the province of a teacher in our public schools is just as much wider than any mere list of subjects, as his training here has transcended the mere exercises of the class room. I may not attempt to discuss all that the situation thus suggests. Three points only would I set in order, as this morning we look out on the open fields of a teacher's opportunity—first, his work in the school room; second, his work for people outside the school room; and third, his work for himself.

In the first place, then, no service in the school room can be considered adequate which has not constant respect to the purpose which the commonwealth has in view in paying for the service rendered. The Republic looks out over the unbridled hosts of the democracy, millions of men swept by all the strenuous fierceness of human greed, human ambition, human passions; she reads the fate of the republics of the past, and in justifiable alarm she summons her wise men; what shall I do? How shall I control a multitude so diverse, so fierce, so heedless, that I may live and not die? And the wise men give answer, "Teach the children; make men intelligent and righteous, and you shall live and not die." And the are my treasures; spend and spare not; do your utmost that my citizens may be intelligent and wise, and I shall never reckon the cost, that the Republic may live and not die." And the wise men go forth, and the school houses rise on every hill-top, and in every valley, on every plain, in every wood, from ocean to ocean; and the teachers enter in! Was there ever such a spectacle in the history of this world recorded in the book of time; a great people rising to educate themselves! Nobody counts the money, nobody mentions the cost; the laborer gives his penny, the millionaire his thousands, his millions; everybody votes "aye," that the Republic, the commonwealth, may live and not die! The school house stands with open door; the teacher enters in!

And now the children begin to gather: you may see them marching, young men and maidens, little children, the boys and the girls; it is autumn; the cool air of morning freshens their youthful faces, and the tinted leaves are rustling about their willing feet.

The school room doors stand open wide and the hosts of

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the republic enter in! The doors are shut, and the teacher stands in presence of her duty. She is set to teaching reading and writing and arithmetic. Yes, yes! And then she begins to read, "that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth!" Who wrote that? Was he rich? Did he have money and stocks and houses and farms? Did he have castles in Europe and dwellings in California? Oh, no; he was poor; so poor that when a boy he could not go to school, but lay on the floor in the light of a fire-place in a prairie cabin, and wrought out his arithmetic on the smooth surface of a wooden shovel, polished in the winnowed grain at the threshing floor where by day he toiled. The children learn his name. They read the story of fifty years ago. They see old men moving about the streets, a copper badge their only decoration. Can they believe it that these were young once, as are they; that boys heard the voice of Abraham Lincoln; that thousands rose to his summons, heard no call to wealth; heard but the voice of duty; disappeared in Southern forests and along the swampy, sedgy rivers, and came back no more? These remain forever young, and the teacher reads again:

> "Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow! For never shall their aureoled presence lack: I see them muster in a gleaming row With ever-youthful brows that nobler show; We find in our dull road their shining track."

Who wrote that? Was he rich? Was he great? Did he have castles in Europe and palaces in New York? Ah, no, he was poor; poor as men count wealth today, but rich, rich, as you see, in all nobler thoughts and ways.

Even so the republic shall be safe. That teacher is teaching reading; she is teaching literature. She has set up a new standard; and presently upon the minds of the young people there begins to dawn a sense of values that are real, that shine and ring through the years, and that can not be measured by all the silver coin of the realm, though silver were free as ever benevolent Mr. Bryan could wish it, and came in showers upon the pavement.

Such visions of value may not come in a day, though sometimes they do; sometimes the lesson of a day lasts for fifty years.

But if not in a day, yet during the years through which American children are moving forward to young manhood and womanhood, through the fair fields of our sweet, pure literature, through our more than romantic, heroic, and generally noble history, through the fascinations of physical science, you may lead them to such an estimate of things really abiding, and satisfying, and worth while in this world, that by and by you have a whole community around you devoted to ideals the best that men know; by and by you have a generation of men loving cleanness and simplicity and beauty; wisdom will be justified of her children, and the commonwealth shall live and not die!

On and after January 1, 1915, every one who teaches in our Iowa public schools must pass an examination in agriculture, manual training and domestic science. But let us not err. Even here we seek not to develop intelligence in the ordinary conduct of our familiar agricultural operations alone; it is not only desired that a teacher be able to know a "hawk from a handsaw," a cart from a plow, a grain of barley from a grain of wheat, a cow from a cabbage; but we seek in fact something far different from this. We would develop in the minds of young people a love for rural scenes and things, gladness in the health and beauty of country life, the nobility and independence of its industries, contentment and joy in the most necessary, most ancient, and universal employments of the race. In other words, we seek again a philosophy, an attitude of mind for all our people, at once patriotic, satisfying, and sane in every way.

Such studies, therefore, shall not interfere with the ordinary cultural studies of our schools. I think I could show an intelligent boy in a few hours how to meet all the needs of a Jersey cow—and she is as finicky as the Duchess of Daisydown—but, all that the schools can teach, and all that the government can do, and all that life may bring forth, may one day still be inadequate, insufficient wholly, to meet the crying loneliness of that same boy's throbbing, longing heart!

Most of the educational criticism of to-day is the most superficial sort of pedantry. We are told that we must fit boys and girls for practical work, that the knowledge of to-day is worth all the lore of the past. In California, two years since, one of these fine critics demonstrated that high school students knew more of Roman history than of happenings reported in the journals of San Francisco, and immediately rushed out with the appeal, "Are our American schools set to make Roman eitizens?" Had he turned his investigation the other way around, he had no doubt discovered that the loafers and worthless idlers of California eities know more of the prizefights, police courts, and Barbary coasts of San Francisco the contents of San Francisco newspapers—than do the boys and girls of the high school, whose reading has been otherwise directed and to whom we are committing year by year the destinies of the republic.

All such criticism is based upon an extremely narrow view of what is practical. If that only is practical which makes for toil and for the necessities of daily living, if the needs of the boy and of the Jersey cow lie thus in the same direction; then our problems of education become simplified indeed. Men were once reckoned and called cattle; but it did not work. The French Revolution disposed forever of that idea. But any educational theory which fails to take account of humanity in man, which fails to reach human love and hope and aspiration, which fails to make dominant the best that mankind has thought and wrought, which fails to recognize the light that is brighter than the arc, the light that lit that useful flame, but shall burn long after every carbon point shall blacken in the glow of day—any criticism of any less scope than this is futile, worthless, meriting consideration only as benevolence might seek to save the critic himself. "I saw an angel standing in the sun!" says the man of the Revelations. The old Scotch preacher read it and exclaimed, "Ye can do little wi' that man who has seen an angel standing in the sun," and he knew whereof he spoke. The light of intelligence is brighter than the sun. We know all about that luminous sphere; and even discount his radiance, as compared with that of other stars, and boldly say at last that "one star differeth from another star in glory."

And yet men say that only that education is practical which teaches a boy to compute interest, to manage a steamengine or a linotype machine, to build a barn for the Jersey cow, or a palace for her owner.

The story is told of a young man and his wife, who stood on a tower in Florence. They looked on the valley of the Arno. They were Americans; possibly from Iowa. They saw never such a view: mountain and plain and river, and fertile field, garden and orchard, forest and city and palace:---

"Here, snatching up a bit of coal, A young creator flung a soul Into a sketch upon the wall Where still you see the vital scrawl: It was four centuries ago,— The boy's name, Michel Angelo.

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Caiano, where for solace went Lorenzo, the Magnificent; Careggi, where he turned aside From the Dominican, and died; Arcetri, whence the unblinded eyes Of Galileo swept the skies.

* * *

Of Vallombrosa, 'Etrurian shades High over-arched,' whence Milton took That image of the leaf-strown brook''—

they even caught a glimpse. They saw all this. They had all that wealth could furnish; but they looked into each other's eyes and said, "How fine it would all be if we only *knew anything!*" They knew many things, but they lacked that particular knowledge our California critic would despise; they lacked intelligence. It was not that they knew no Italian or Latin, or anything abstruse; but simply that they did not know the meaning of Florence; not even where to find the needed information; they did not know the meaning of their time, the history of the world. They had missed entirely intellectual satisfaction, intellectual joy. The only pleasure that wealth can not buy; only the teacher can bring us in sight of illumination such as this.

But in the second place your opportunity lies also outside the schoolroom.

A former president of the University of Illinois, not long ago, gave to a graduating class this advice: "Keep step with the procession. It is a pretty good crowd, and it is generally moving in the right direction. Act with the party; yell for the ticket; and whoop it up for the flag!"

Dr. Draper was a very eminent man, commissioner of education for the state of New York. He no doubt was a thoroughly patriotic and useful man; but in this speech we can not agree with him at all. To take such an attitude is virtually to throw to the winds on the streets every ideal we set up in the school. Dr. Draper's intention is good. He meant that we should be in sympathy with the enthusiasm of our fellow-men, that we should be loyal to our own institutions as we find them, no doubt; and yet not for a moment can we agree with Dr. Draper's careless statement. He has the whole case turned wrong end to.

The business of the teacher is to be informed and to set the step for the crowd, and guide the direction of its movement. Even the flag may be carried in wrong directions. And as for the party, the safety of the constitution lies in the very fact that men are intelligent enough all the time not to act with party when the party goes plainly wrong. Mr. Bryan found that out, and so did Mr. Taft, and even our most illustrious leader of reform finds in Amazon forests betimes space for reflection. To the phrase, "Whoop it up," the distinguished body of purists now before me would doubtless immediately give answer, "Cut it out!"

But there are a thousand ways in which a teacher may serve his or her community and not enter the political field at all. We may even leave politics largely to men, as is still for a season the fashion, I believe, in benighted Iowa, and yet in social and economic ways find opportunity to serve the commonwealth to most noble purpose. Women avail to bring to a community the spirit of sanity, of cleanness, of beauty that touches every home, even the humblest, every avenue and street, even the widest and finest. Here is the especial field of the woman who is called to teach. She has the ideas and the inspiration; others will furnish the money,—for reason. Every civic problem, every effort for the welfare of children, as well as for the safety of their mothers, is field-work for the trained and gifted teacher, and makes everywhere for the conservation of our free institutions.

The difference between teachers is not so much in what they teach as in themselves, in their appreciation of what they attempt, their grasp of duty, their ability to serve.

But, lastly, no man, as it seems to me, is sufficient for all these things, who does not somehow find perpetual recreation in some form of self-culture; and so in the third place I have ventured to suggest the teacher's duty to himself—the duty of continued intellectual effort in some field of intellectual delight.

Let us speak not now of organized graduate study; what I urge is broader than that, and will apply after all formal graduate work has been completed. I refer to the student's own care of his own intellectual life. No student passes through an institution such as this without finding somewhere his interest quickened, his taste aroused, so that he realizes his preference for some one definite thing-for language, science, mathematics, literature. Let him follow his preference. Let him by private study become the best arithmetician, the best astronomer, the best physicist in Iowa; let him pursue to the last detail the science of field and river, as everywhere such is now accessible; let him study his favorite language, his favorite page of history. In all these things, rather in some one of them, he shall find the pathway of life. Perhaps literature he affects. How fair the field! How great the opportunity! How needed in Iowa the art! Study literature, read it, create it. On these rich fields its coming is delayed. But it yet shall rise from the spirit-peopled mists where our prairie rivers wind, from the golden shadows that move across our corn-embroidered fields, from the haunting memory of red man and pioneer, as these move dimly by forest, grove, and spring.

These are some of the things that shall save the teacher, and so make him mighty to save the community, the commonwealth.

In real physical things we are rich enough today. We have exploited the accumulated wealth of millenia and are surfeited. What we need is wisdom to use our inheritance. This we must have if we are not to sink in the mire of commercialism and see all high vision, all pure appreciation, blotted out for us and for our children. To avert such catastrophe, you men and women are this day set apart; to forfend it by your own loyal enthusiasm; by the ideals you set up to anticipate the swiftness of its coming, that the Republic may live and not die!

